At the time, Pierce was one of the only Bitcoiners with real money to invest, earned in an almost impossibly picaresque career. After *The Mighty Ducks,* he appeared in a commercial for Gushers—he transformed into a banana after eating one of the fruit snacks—and starred as a mischievous presidential son in *First Kid*. But soon afterward, he lost interest in Hollywood.

When he was sixteen, in 1996 or 1997, an actor friend introduced him to the founder of a dot-com start-up called Digital Entertainment Network, or DEN. The company had raised tens of millions of dollars with a plan to make TV obsolete by streaming four- to six-minute shows aimed at teens. DEN's founder, Marc Collins-Rector, was in his late thirties. He lived in an over-the-top mansion in Encino, California, once owned by Death Row Records founder Marion "Suge" Knight. He and his much younger boyfriend, Chad—only a teenager when they got together—each drove Ferraris.

There were serious problems with DEN's business plan. For one thing, the dial-up internet connections prevalent at the time weren't fast enough to stream video. But for Collins-Rector, the real appeal of the venture seemed to be surrounding himself with good-looking teenage boys. He took a liking to Pierce right away. Pierce, still a teenager himself, was made executive vice president of DEN at the ridiculous salary of $250,000 a year. He was tasked with producing a web show called *Chad's World*. The show, which featured the future *American Pie* actor Seann William Scott, was about a rich, older gay man who takes in a young boy named Chad. It was like a "gay pedophile version of *Silver Spoons,*" the 1980s sitcom, a viewer told *Radar* magazine.

This is where the story gets dark. According to a series of lawsuits, news reports, and documents filed in a federal criminal investigation, Collins-Rector threw parties at the mansion where teenagers were plied with drugs and alcohol, pressured to have sex with older men, and, in some cases, raped. "I was passed around like a party favor," one seventeen-year-old later recalled.

One of the first of those lawsuits was filed in 1999, and the next year, on the advice of a private detective, Collins-Rector fled Los Angeles in a private jet, loaded with enough Louis Vuitton luggage to fill two Lincoln Town Cars. His boyfriend and Pierce came along. They only decided the destination once they were airborne, choosing Spain, and eventually settled in the seaside resort town of Marbella.

The authorities caught up with them two years later. Collins-Rector was eventually extradited to the United States, where he pleaded guilty to transporting minors across state lines for the purposes of sex. Pierce was released without charges after spending a month in a Spanish prison.